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CITY PASTORALS
AND
OTHER POEMS

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CITY PASTORALS.

By William Griffith

City Pastorals

and Other Poems

BY

WILLIAM GRIFFITH
Author of "Loves and Losses of Pierrot"

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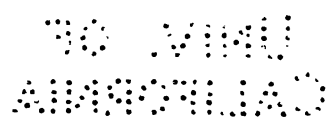
CALIFORNIA

NEW YORK
JAMES T. WHITE & CO.
1918

Credit is due to *McClure's, Smart Set, Poetry, The Fra, Theatre Magazine, The Poetry Journal, The International, Current Opinion,* the Sun Dial editor of the New York *Evening Sun,* to the editor of *The Bang,* and to other publications for having published many of these poems.



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1918

TO FLORENCE.

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ARGUMENT.

Rumor A Friend

Rumor: So this may be considered, in a friendly way and without beating about the bush, as another—an American—word added to what has already been so excellently done with the eclogue?

Friend: Yes. As the title indicates, it is simply a group of lyrics in dialogue, flavored of the country, and intended to be more or less appropriate to the four seasons.

Rumor: Although done in verse, do you think that rhyme in dialogue is natural?

Friend: It may be musical. The world, in its infancy, lisped in numbers—and verse, antedating prose as a medium of auditory expression, would seem to be equally natural.

Rumor: Exactly. And yet the book does not seem to offer any progressive gospel, nor to urge any specific remedies for such evils as prevail and are more or less clearly indicated.

Friend: No. It urges nothing, save perhaps the gospel of striving to find beauty in daily things.

Brown:

And crocuses and mary-buds
Are shyly opening.

But never bud or bloom or bird,
Or sylvan serenade,
Have we on Broadway seen or heard
Above the din of trade.

Nothing remains for one to sing
That was not sung of old,
Except that nearly everything
But death is bought and sold.

Ay—what is life but something cheap,
And means of living dear!
And what a luxury to sleep
Beyond a waking here!

Gray:

Of course—desires and pleasures are
Enhanced by death.

Brown:

The stress
Of living seems to grow.

Gray:

We mar
Our health and happiness
In our own souls and bodies by
Imagining the worst
Precedes the best.

Brown:

Mere martyrs!

Gray:

Why
Aspire to be the first?

Heaven with hell sometimes agrees
That man be gay, instead
Of vainly coveting the ease
And leisure of the dead.

Brown:

Oblivion is failure still.

Gray:

Success is understood
By those alone who have the will
To please the multitude.

Brown:

Success is something more and more
Impossible to gauge,
Amid the heavy iron roar
And thunder of the age.

Relying on themselves, the strong
Condemn and criticize,
Or damn the weakling in the throng
Who may not win the prize;

Or storm the age with mightier deeds
Than are for us to try,

Who flourish simply as the weeds
That sprout and grow and die.

Life lingers on in hodden gray,
For one condemned to yearn
And rot ignobly day by day,
Being hardly meet to burn.

My soul has no dynamic force,
Nor energy divine,
To follow any other course
Than happens to be mine.

And whatsoever may befall
Is profitless and stale;
My youth has been a prodigal
At every bargain sale.

Wherefore my once divine desires
Have crumbled into dust,
Now that all passion in me tires,
Confusing love and lust.

I hear the clamor of the town,
As something that pursues
A fugitive to drag him down
And put him in the news.

Anon a trumpet warning peals
And challenges the fears
That rush and rally at my heels,
And gather with the years.

On my despairing gaze, the sun
Of Arcady and Ind
Appears like innocence when one
Defiantly has sinned.

Gray:
The imagery is as dim
As innocence to me,
Upon my word!

Brown:
A passing whim
To jest at misery.

Nor may you wholly realize
The ghosts that haunt my sight
Persistently and tyrannize
The regions of the night.

Wanly the stars go swarming by,
Like moths upon the wing,
On whom the Spider of the sky
Is ever battening.

Fairer than lilies in a dell,
The Plains of Night are strewn
With silvery shadows that foretell
The coming of the Moon.

Gray:
Good-lack!

Brown:

The heavy sable shade
Is yonder backward drawn:
Behold Her walking like a maid,
Far on the starry lawn

In blossom!

Gray:

Dian is abroad
Without a chaperone!

Brown:

No, no!

Gray:

Betray and then defraud
Yourself—and live alone;

For you must answer, ill or well,
For all you do and see.

Brown:

With eyes that dwell, as one in hell,
On far felicity,

I still review the simple ways
Of happy, hallowed years.
Of late the sun has led my days
In very sordid spheres.

By night a coil of avenues
Around a thousand eyes,

Is writhing where the city views
Inviolable skies

Adorned and jeweled with the stars.
Beneath them, waging stark
Rebellion, many a toiler wars
With hunger in the dark.

Like ghosts of former lass and lad,
Are ghoulish shapes that greet
And spend themselves upon the sad,
Gay women of the street.

By day the sore and feeble stray
Amid the sights that breed
In lanes and avenues—the prey
Of every crouching need.

Once—once when, raving in his cell,
As back and forth he trod,
They said the convict prayed to hell—
I damned and doubted God.

Gray:

Divinity has been denied
By many a brooding mind;
And looking on the darkest side
Drives men and women blind.

Though Life and Love are bought and sold,
Remember that the trees
Forever mantle, as of old,
With green embroideries.

Glad April pipes right merrily;
And when the apples fall,
The lanterns of Sainte Eulalie
Are beacons to us all.

Hearing the *matins* and the *lauds*
Of heaven chime and ring,
The sun still rises and applauds
The jocund shout of Spring.

Brown:

On Broadway, by a happy chance,
My eyes have freshly seen
The soul of April and Romance,
Not far from Bowling Green.

And something came down from the skies,
Distilling fresh delight,
As though a rose in human guise
Had blossomed on my sight.

Ah! had it been the Holy Grail,
Or an old Christian shrine,
No greater wonder could prevail
Than made the day divine.

For a once dear familiar face
And presence suddenly
Were summoned from the past to grace
A fading memory.

And like a song that has been sung,
Or story that is told,
My aching thoughts have been among
The happy days of old.

Enter Green.

Gray:

What news? Have you been on the mount
Where grows the herb of grace?
And near enough to Spring to count
The blushes on her face?

Green:

I? I have overheard the rill
Rehearse for hours and hours;
And witnessed, over dale and hill,
The marriage of the flowers.

And learned why Time is fleeting—aye!
And why Art is so long;
And on a week-end holiday
Have made a little song—

A song that haply has been sung,
And been rehearsed again,
Since Time and Chance and Love were young.

Gray:

Recite or sing it, then.

Green: (*recites*).

SONG.

They have asked me why the flowers,
Lady mine,
Cast a shadow on the hours,
As they pine.
Surely they know not the room
In dream-chambers where the gloom
May be sweetened by a bloom,
Lady mine!

If I plucked the stars for roses,
Lady mine,
And told all that Day discloses,
As the shine
Of the sunlight strikes the shade
Round the golden petals laid
On your bosom, they would fade,
Lady mine.

But if I could run a brook,
Lady mine,
That with chatters through each nook
Would entwine,
In its ebb and surge and flow,
All the roses, do you know
What the breeze would whisper low,
Lady mine?

Brown:

Have done! No solace may be won
By taking Love in vain.

Gray:

Love seeks for solace in the sun,
As well as in the rain.

Green:

Ah! The heart of Time grows heavy,
Lady mine.
Few that mustered in the levy
Are in line.
Do you know what age will do
To the roses plucked for you,
When the sun has left no dew,
Lady mine?

Gray:

Coming with Cupid from the woods,
The king-cups you have seen
Approach and doff their little hoods
Before the Fairy Queen!

Brown:

A gross anachronism! Bow
Them out of doors.

Green:

I seem
To see the fairies even now,
As in a boyish dream:

Away down in a wooded dell,
Still trooping through the shade,
Step by step to an elfin bell
An eery cavalcade.

Anon the warriors gather round
With leafy lances bent;
The beetle, with his bugle wound,
Proclaims the tournament.

And dimly, as the airy sprites
Upraise a muffled cheer,
The firefly in the grasses lights
His swinging chandelier.

Gray:
Since when have you returned
From where the twilight veils
Arcadia?

Brown:
And only learned
To foster fairy tales
Of revelry?

Green:
A starry fay,
With heaven listening
Out on the hills, taught me today
A song the thrushes sing:

Something bids the forest hush;
Little pinions softly whir.
Hardly in the underbrush
Does a leaf or shadow stir.

Is it playing just in fun,
Or in tears the forest grieves,
Ere the happy morning sun
Glances in among the leaves?

Oh, to hear a happy voice!
Just the angel of the rain,
Bidding earth and sky rejoice!
Sing on—sing that song again!

Gray:
What?
Brown:
On the hills?
Green:
Yes: let me think.
Gray:
Think? Never think to pin
The angels down. But up and drink
A health to Spring!
Brown:
Begin.
Gray:
Daily there is but little more
Than duty to be done,

Nor right to rest attained before
The setting of the sun.
A stout heart is the merry heart,
Upon a fading trail;
And though it end where it did start,
I sing the humming ale.

CHORUS.

We sing the humming ale, good friend!
But here's a health to you;
With one more, when the trail shall end,
To turn and start anew.
Heigh-ho! the bowl, from brim to brim,
Lies full. Fill a cup.
While now the rosy apples swim,
Drink deep! Drink it up!

Green:

The sounding city offers some
Felicity, but oh,
Once more at leisure let me roam
Where prairie breezes blow!
Once more the sturdy roving foot;
And with an ample load
Of light hopes and an easy boot,
I sing the open road.

CHORUS.

We sing the open road, good friend!
But here's a health to you;
With one more to the nappy blend
Of Saxon in the brew.
Heigh-ho! the bowl, from brim to brim,
Lies full. Fill a cup.
While now the rosy apples swim,
Drink deep! Drink it up!

Brown:

Shuddering cities fall asleep,
Obediently still.
Bedded in darkness is the deep
Dream of the urging will.
Shirking the burden and the stress,
The gypsy has to rove;
But still, for hope and happiness,
I sing the song of love.

CHORUS.

We sing the song of love, good friend!
But here's a health to you;
With one more to the hopes that send
The parting moments through.
Heigh-ho! the bowl, from brim to brim,
Lies full. Fill a cup.
While now the rosy apples swim,
Drink deep! Drink it up!

SUMMER

SCENE AND PERSONS: THE SAME

Evening. The room is lighted by hanging lamps in the center. On a table are pipes and glasses, a jar of tobacco and a crock of ale. The moon shines through an eastern window.

Green:

A clear soprano, filled with sun,
The thrush repeats his wedding song.

Gray:

Once more blithe summer voices throng.

Green:

Once more the gossip waters run.

Gray:

They murmur of the flowers of hope,
That twinkled over fens and lakes.

Green:

Upon a thousand gardens breaks
A thunder-shower of heliotrope.

Gray:

And daisy-blossoms fringe the lanes.

Green:

And where the drowsy primrose dreams
The livelong day, the woodland streams
Are brimming with the summer rains.

The robin beats his golden gong
With rapture, leading many a band
Of woodland minstrels.

Gray:

Down the land,
Come thrush and black-bird borne along.

They say a bird on every tree
Is busy with a song.

Brown:

They say
A million human voices pray
Upon a second Calvary.

A distant sound of weary feet
Arises and assails my ears,
As though a fountain-head of tears
Were playing yonder in the street.

Green:

The owl molests the solemn chime
In many a belfry far away.

Brown:

To-whit, to-whoo—which is to say
That to be happy is a crime.—

Dumb, beyond dreaming, who can be
Deaf to the ever-clanging bell
That registers and rings the knell
Of faith and hope and charity!

Green:

And still the bells of elfland ring
In the high turrets of the air.

Brown:

What wonder that the owl must stare,
Like one whose wits are wandering!

Green:

What wonder that, on nights as clear
And bright as this, the elfin folk,
Who paint the lilies, on the stroke
Of twelve, are wonted to appear!

Brown:

So far may fancy, rather, stray.

Green:

No, no!

Brown:

Then bid your fancy go,
And be a swallow in the glow
Of meadows waving far away.

Gray:

Turn down the lamps.

Green:

Wait!

Brown:

Turn them out
Completely!

Green:

You may fail to see.

Gray:

Dive deep. We promise secrecy.

Brown:

Begin while silence soothes the doubt.

Green:

Softly the wandering breezes pass
And whisper something through the years,
Disclosing all the green frontiers,
As in a magic looking-glass.

Afar the blue horizon fills
And mantles with a rosy foam:
And now the herds are nearing home,
As evening gathers on the hills.

A distant ridge: with shaded eyes,
I stand and gaze; and over all
The hills and dales a human call
Arises fraught with thronging sighs;

Arises with an echo so
Melodious and thin and lone,
The thrushes launch a trembling tone
On waves of music sobbing low.

And over hill and over dale,
As darkness deepens on the land,

Softly the Moon, with cloudy hand,
Puts on her lace and silver veil.

Remotely ebbing—heard again,
The sobbing billows faintly break
On phantom shores: the zephyrs shake,
And darkness overruns the plain.

Brown:

It is too dark indeed to find
Beauty amid such ugliness
As one deplores, with less and less
Despair of ever going blind.

The city goes from bad to worse,
And festers like a running sore
That spreads and, growing more and more,
Is slowly rotting to a curse:

A discord!

Green:

Could one only see
A blue-bird tarry in the street!

Gray:

Extremes, wide-circling, often meet;
And discord strengthens harmony.

So never mope, nor ever dwell
On direful woes and ancient wrongs,
As maddening as the maddest songs
Of cap and bell.

Brown:

Beneath the spell

Of ambushed meanings that dismay
My wondering soul, above me leer
Devouring eyes—as those of Fear.

Gray:

Unleash the dogs and come away!

A danger, wooed in wilfulness,
Caps vanity.

Green:

Which, capped, avoid.
Decisive moments, unemployed,
Are swift forerunners of distress.

Brown:

Who can avoid the human pang
That stabs a spirit at the Throne,
When many hear the doom of one
Who dreamt his foolish dreams—and sang!

Green:

Or wise or foolish, let us cross
No bridges ere we come to them.

Gray:

Forever has the rarest gem
Been hidden where the tempests toss.

And so, another round of ale,
And someone sound a sylvan note.

Green:

As once in outland ways remote
Was heard the whistle of the quail

Across the lonely miles and far
Away where earth and heaven meet
On hallowed ground, in dear and sweet
Communion with the evening star.

Brown:

There are no longer any dews
In mist or rain, nor any bell
To toll me nearer home and quell
The thunder of the avenues.

Green:

Away from irking toil and town,
New hopes may blossom and unfold.

Brown:

Aspire and dream and feel the old
Enthusiasm dying down!

My courage bends beneath the weight
Of obligations to be met;
And on me heavily is set
The scarlet seal of love and hate.

My soul is rubbed by every wrong
It touches—and is red and raw.

Life rasps me like a rusty saw
That drones a lazy, vicious song.

Art? Nature? Each a heartless bawd,
Supreme in her indifference!
They have obsessed my every sense,
Save that which deems them but a fraud.

Ahead are spread the dreary years
In drab and dull monotony;
And mine but weakly is to see
The rainbows that are woven tears.

Nor may the Message of the Dawn
Be mine to sing or mine to say,
When the Great Question bars the way.

Green:

The Question?

Brown:

Written here.

Gray:

Go on.

Brown (*reading*):

SONG.

Why is the young world weeping,
With its heart so full of song?
And eyes like pools of vision,
Rain-blue and sun-strong?

Nor a broken hope for a pillow,
Nor a treasure worth the keeping,
In view of the gold the morrows hold:
Why is the young world weeping?

Why is the strong world weeping,
With the thunders in its grasp?
And love so willow-slender
And ready to its clasp?
Time, in the middle harvest
Of sowing days and reaping,
Delays to page the Golden Age:
Why is the strong world weeping?

Why is the gray world weeping,
With heaven so near at hand?
And with no wish nor wonder
Elsewise to understand?
Drowned hopes have turned to coral,
And Age comes creeping, creeping
Down to the streams of deep day-dreams:
Why is the gray world weeping?

Gray:
Self-flattery and praise withheld,
Being the base of shallow grief,
It has become my firm belief
That tears are seldom deeply welled.

Green:

If duty has been reckoned least,
A song is nobler never sung.

Gray:

Devoutly rosaries are strung
For penitents as well as priest.

Green:

Well said!

Brown:

Albeit feeble speech
May touch the story clumsily,
Some haunting Presence follows me,
Prodigious in its subtle reach.

I gaze from heaven, from the gate,
Adown the dim, vast starlit hall,
Wherein the nations rise and fall
Like shadows, at the whim of Fate.

A moment near, a moment gone,
And sounding on the iron skies,
A Voice of Thunder dwells and dies;
And so the world moves on and on.

Crowding the distant starry road,
With banners fading one by one,
The pageant passes and—alone,
I dream the solitude of God.

Green:

Unreal reality.

Gray:

Yes—yes!

The paradox may have a phase

Of truth: but come, a health—to raise

This siege of growing moodiness!

Green:

A health around!

Gray:

One more—and then,

Good-night.

Green:

You leave?

Gray:

My holiday.

Green:

And whither?

Gray:

England.

Green:

What? Hooray

For Merrie England once again!

Gray:

For all the English flags unfurled

Beneath the sun!

Brown:

And why not our
Republic, mighty with the power
To mold the future of the world,

With hands as strong and sure as Fate?
The emblem of the flag we fly
Is peace, to station manhood high,
Or war, to make a nation great.

Green:

And Germany?

Gray:

A feudal folk,
Whose blood is surging through our veins.

Green:

Dark Russia?

Gray:

Groaning at the yoke,
Still Russia toward freedom strains.

And France, whom words may not express,
Whose glory may not be denied,
Still flushes, deeply mortified,
Behind a veil of loveliness.

But all are watching, from afar,
An empire, born of old distress,
Awakening to consciousness.

Green:

The glory of our rising star
Shall never wane.

Gray:

The sword and pen
We wield as when our fathers saw
The dawn of Universal Law,
In England among Englishmen.

Brown:

I think of Ireland held in thrall.

Gray:

I think that I have somewhere heard
Of freedom as an Irish word,
Revered among us most of all.

Erin, that hungers for a crumb,
Like a belovéd vagabond,
Remains improvident—the fond
And foolish waif of Christendom.

Brown:

For Law and Freedom!

Brown:

Why not, pray,
America—and with a cheer?

Green:

Hurrah—stand up!

Brown:

And let us hear
From some one with a wassail.

Gray:

Stay!

We have heard the toast to a people
Who inherit the English tongue;
By the men of the far horizons
Their praises have been sung—
Sung by the warder kinsmen,
Whose cause is a common cause,
When the vandal cannon thunder
Against the iron laws.

Abroad are the King and the Kaiser
War-bent on the thin frontier.
Under the seas come stealthily
A rumor and a fear.
Shall the nations not be wiser
Than Goth and Frank and Hun,
Till the great gray seas cease chanting
Under the tranquil sun?

Blow winds, blow the West good tidings!
Blow peace to the South and North!
And tonight, as the starry cohorts
Break ranks and sally forth,
And the lights of a beacon empire
Flash clear to the seventh sea,
Drink—drink that the sun shall ever
Be shining on the free!

And peace to the cobwebbed cannon!
In peace, as brothers may,
While the ships of a Whiter Squadron
Ride on to a brighter day,
A health to the Unknown Father!
To the Universal Plan!
And the Law of a kindred children,
From the States to Hindostan!

AUTUMN.

SCENE AND PERSONS: THE SAME

Entering.

Brown:

Four months?

Gray:

Today.

Brown:

And you are back
From overseas to recommend
The treadmill and the beaten track,
That lead to nothing in the end:

Where men, who want for daily bread,
Are vassals of the phantom will,
And daily subject to the dread
That need and ghoulish laws instill.

going everything—to think
Of wandering across the sea,
And having time to breathe, and drink
The nectar of such luxury!

Ah! to have spent a summer there,
Before the war hounds yelped and bayed!
And was the Old World very fair?
Or were its edges worn and frayed?

Green:
Was it congenial, as of old,
To view at ease, on pleasure bent,
The parlor countries wherein lolled
The lords of leisure and content?

Brown:
Contentment may waylay the sun,
And thaw the zones to mellow mirth,
Yet coldly comfort any one
Denied the freedom of the earth.

Green:
What was it like? How did it seem,
Upon a tramp abroad, to see,
Abruptly, like a broken dream,
A new page turned in history?

In August to have seen mankind
Deliberately stab itself!

Gray:

The war? Why, Europe went stone blind;
And hell broke loose in search of pelf.

The vultures, that do commonly
Haunt the gray edges of the world,
Plucked at its heart.

Brown:

Yet you were free
To mix and mingle where they whirled.

Gray:

And you?

Brown:

I? I have been a slave
To ways and woes and written words.—

Green:

Indeed?

Brown:

Not having dared to brave
Dismissal and go where the birds,

Across the dreamy, golden hours,
Through sunny afternoons took flight,
And, singing, wakened in the flowers
The pulses of a new delight.

Necessity has made me fear
The pinch of poverty and need,
To drudge and duel daily here,
With thoughts of other mouths to feed.

Touching the spirit of it all,
Is something deeper than distress,
As now and then I half recall
Some old forgotten happiness.

Maugre the tear that wells and thrills
From heart to eyes that strive to see
The waning wonders on the hills
And frontiers of eternity.

Gray:

I have a poem that may cheer
And lift and take you out of town,
And make you hold as something dear
The green-grass gospel.

Green:

Read it, Brown.

Brown (*reading*):

WANDERLUST.

God, with a dawning gaze,
Kindles the sun,
Forging the iron days
One after one;

Shapes and designs the trees,
And now and then,
Fanning the furnaces,
Labors on men;

Smiting and hammering
This from an ape,
That from a stammering
Primeval shape;

Giving them each the vast
Reach of the sky,
Since the dark ages passed
Tardily by.

Showing the way to choose
Rest and reward
From the green revenues
Next to the sward;

Urging and beckoning
City and town
Forth for a reckoning
Now and anon

Over the open trail,
Clean from the din;
Sun—stars—a friendly hail,
Lights and the Inn.

Green:
Harken the heavy iron clang,
Such as the world was built upon!
Brown:
Oh for the time when Homer sang
The holy candor of the dawn!

Gray:

Why brood and browse on Once and Then,
When Here and Now are full of hope,
And women bravely tread with men
The upward and the downward slope.

Green:

Or whether in or whether out,
When Fortune happens down the way,
Be thankful for the call.

Gray:

And shout
With us who hail the coming day.

Brown:

A far cry!

Green:

No!

Gray:

Whom have you met
To introduce so much of gloom?
In happiness one must forget.

Brown:

My Spring, that left, forgot to bloom.

And happiness, though erstwhile sweet,
Was but as poppies ere they swoon,
With faces shyly raised to meet
A fatal kiss—the kiss of noon.

For days grow long, and one grows tired
Of shaping ways and means to fit;
Keeping ahead of hunger—hired,
The latest auctioneer of wit.

Alas that flattery is sought
By those who covet and, like me,
Clutch at the tangled ends of thought,
And borrow at sad usury!

With all the harvest of a youth
Misspent, I now am left by Art
With needless songs, to bear—forsooth!
The burden of a wasted heart.

Green:

Crosses and thorns are grievous—though
We carry burdens of our own.

Gray:

As Jacob did, when long ago
His harder pillow was a stone.

The moral is as broad today
As it is long—and new and true
As is our greatly simply lay,
That trumpets the Red, White and Blue—

Green:

The flag!

Gray:

The flag that Grant and Lee
At Appomattox saw unfurled,

To bid us stand for liberty
And be the conscience of the world.

Brown:

What? Bide in any London crowd,
Berlin, or Petrograd, amid
Paris, when Paris thinks aloud,
Or in Vienna, Rome, Madrid;

And hear the slight and grudging praise
That scouts our chances to attain
What Lincoln dreamt, except to raise
And crown a shadowy Charlemagne!

Gray:

Too late. No Cæsars need apply;
And Charlemagnes are overdue.
Shining for us to travel by
Is peace to light the ages through.

Green:

Begin again!

Brown:

An antique rôle,
When all about us is the din
Of armament.

Gray:

A pipe and bowl,
And we are all immortal!

Brown:

In

The breath of war, it does suffice
To say that such as we who sing
Are but as foolish little flies,
Or hornets eunuch-fain to sting.

So praises be—and let us hear
How Green has found the countryside;
And how the golden fields appear,
With portaled harvests opened wide.

Green:

Occultly through a riven cloud,
The ancient river shines again,
Still wandering like a silver road
Among the cities in the plain.

On far horizons softly lean
The hills against the coming night;
And mantled with a russet green,
The orchards gather into sight.

Through apples hanging high and low,
In ruddy colors, deeply spread
From core to rind, the sun melts slow,
With gold upcaught across the red.

And here and there, with sighs and calls,
Among the hills an echo rings
Remotely as the water falls
And down the meadow softly sings.

A wind goes by; the air is stirred
With secret whispers far and near;
Another token—just a word
Had made the rose's meaning clear.

I see the fields; I catch the scent
Of pine cones and the fresh split wood,
Where bearded moss and stains are blent
With autumn rains—and all is good.

An air, arising, turns and lifts
The fallen leaves where they had lain
Beneath the trees, then weakly shifts
And slowly settles back again.

While with far shouts, now homeward bound,
Across the fields the reapers go;
And, with the darkness closing round,
The lilies of the twilight blow.

Brown:
Cease, cease!
Gray:
Around us rolls and roars
The tide of traffic.
Green:
Over trees,
On wood and orchard Nature pours
Her crimson autumn witcheries.

Brown:

All day the roaring tide has rolled,
On every side, on every hand.

Green:

And all day have been lavished gold
And glory on the autumn land.

Brown:

A captive spirit is but one
Imploring something beautiful.

Gray:

Lanier and Whitman saw the sun
As something other than the dull

Had yet imagined.

Brown:

Artists crave
The hidden soul in everything.

Green:

The vireos of autumn rave
With mellow voices carolling

So sweetly!

Brown:

Art is full of cant,
Deluding those who are but wise
Enough to crave a stimulant
Made half of truth and half of lies.

Green:

Of lies?

Gray:

No, no! Men meet and part
In droves and flocks; but it is fleece
Half clothes the world: and as for Art,
The city is a masterpiece.

Brown:

Art surely has gone out of date,
And Worship has been shot with fear.
Alas that it has been too late
To bid the old gods reappear!

Recant nor call it heresy
To lay the phantom fires of hell;
Nor worship with a cringing knee
The narrow God of Israel.

Gray:

Beauty and Truth and Love are still
The trinity—the polar star,
Guiding perchance by starry will
Such derelicts as mortals are.

Brown:

Truth that in fire and flower has slept
Since Eden and the dawn of dreams,
Is roused nor kept awake except
By mortals going to extremes.

Green:

For mortal eyes it is but meet
That beauty never grows so fair

But that one, searching in the street,
May find it lurking here and there.

In dust and gutter and the whine
Of poverty may still be found
The accent, as of things divine,
Lost in a wilderness of sound.

Yet take us hence and let us hear
Of knights and kings and seneschals;
In the gray empires bring us near
The moats and mossy castle walls—

When victor over vanquished stood,
And men thought chivalry to be
A pilgrimage in manlihood,
Before the shrine of courtesy.

Gray:

So long ago they went their way
That but their shadows now remain,
Beyond such things as be today,
With chivalry upon the wane.

Europe is still across a blue,
Interminable barricade,
And gazes frowning on the new
Frontier and order we have made.

Goodly and fair it is the while
To muse on hallowed shrines, and see
As in a vision, slowly file
The knightly ranks of pageantry:

When he, the lion-hearted king,
Was royally a troubadour;
And he, of fame still echoing,
Stabbed France awake at Azincour;

Or when those early warrior lords,
Within the Temple Garden gate,
Ere Towton was a field of swords,
Raised the white rose and wrecked a State.

But life has come to have less room
For conflict than in ages gone,
And much less need of men in whom
The ape and tiger linger on.

Brown:

Less room? less need? How reconcile
The ape and tiger as revealed?
The world would kiss Christ with a smile,
Clutching a dagger half concealed.

Gray:

The world?

Brown:

Ay—the same Judas world,
That never changes or grows old;
In whose heart treachery lies curled
And venomous and serpent-cold.

Gray:

Nay! Catholic humanity,
Whose ribs are made of rocks and sod,

Remains deep-hearted as the sea,
And just about as broad as God.

And gladly does it hear the gay
And sanguine voice of Shakespeare sing
Such songs as only singers may
When joy-bells of a nation ring.

Brown:

I question Shakespeare.

Gray:

Be inclined
To doubt the name, but heed the voice
And motions of the mighty mind
That made the morning stars rejoice.

Green:

His gaily, gallantly to reign,
And be, among the men of rhyme,
A poet ever to remain
And cheer the heavy heart of Time.

Gray:

His voice the heavens bent to hear!

Green:

His sway is over all romance!

Brown:

And all reality!

Gray:

I fear
No eulogies are left for France.

Nor for the deep-toned singing land,
Whose passions now are running wild;
Rude, rabid, ruthless to command,
And simple-hearted as a child.

Nor for the royal Savoyard,
Who reigns in Rome, where Cæsars reigned,
Weighing the chances of reward,
Victor in name—but not ordained.

Nor for the Man of Destiny
Who, in his hour of triumph—lo!
With unawed will was soon to see
The ruined dream at Fontainebleau.

Brown:

And life has come to have less room
For conflict than in ages gone?

Gray:

The dawn breaks slowly through the gloom
And shadow of Napoleon;

Breaks slowly through the sombre night
That darkened Spain—and that again,
On Mexico falls like a blight,
Shrouding the slayer and the slain.

Nor shall one prophesy the end,
While Hope and Love continue strong.

Brown:

The most of strength that we can lend
It but to tell the Right from Wrong.

Disgorged on us a motley crowd
Has surged—a tide no laws do stem.
They sap our life-blood. Are we proud
To have put genius into them?

Gray:

Cuba, that staggered in the dark,
Hastened the dawn and bade us see
Clearly the way ahead, and mark
The milestones of eternity.

Lo! now that Europe has been shot,
And, hydra-headed, lies half-curled,
Our glory to have not forgot
To be the conscience of the world.

Green:

Hope dwells in this young land of ours!

Gray:

That groping out of darkness grew!

Green:

Her woods are wild with native flowers!

Brown:

In them are rosemary and rue.

WINTER

TIME: 1914-15.

SCENE AND PERSONS: THE SAME

Logs blazing on the hearth.

Gray:

A merry blaze brings in the year.

Green:

The world is blithe and warm
In many a home where none may hear
The slander of the storm.

As fabled as the desert suns,
And very far away,
Remains the thunder of the guns,
Turning the empires gray.

Remote is Russia, in a trance;
And England, Belgium—dazed
By the great light that shines in France.
Is Europe not amazed?

Gray:

Amazed can hardly be the word,
Since Europe is too old
To be amazed—and has not heard
The Message rightly told.

Greater it is than has been said,
Or dreamt or prophesied,
By those who dreamt and who are dead,
Or dream and have not died.

Green:

Cronies of owlish vision know
That Right, as well as Wrong,
Is swaying empires to and fro,
And driving them along.

Gray years and tears are but as one
Wan dew-drop in a cup,
Just brimming over ere the sun
Forever dries it up.

Despair and strength we have in kind,
The sunshine and the showers,
Among the elements that bind
And hold us to the flowers.

So come—bring on the ruddy ale,
If only to be sure
That hope and happiness prevail
That men may but endure.

Once more—a health!

Brown: Words—warm and light!
But warmer, lighter still,
Must be the hearts of those tonight
Who would evade the chill.

For yonder crouching in his lair,
  Now shrewdly shifting—hark!
How the keen claws of Winter tear
  The marrow of the dark!

Ah! comrades, who may know how wild
  And piercing, incomplete,
Is silence when a little child
  Begs vainly in the street?

By many a hearth, in sore distress,
  The mother, hollow-eyed,
Is hiding from a childish guess
  Her deep heart-broken pride.

Wrestling so playfully with Fate,
  Give pause amid the strife
And realize how desperate
  Is each and every life.

God! the remorseless pendulum
  Ticks on and tolls the knell
Of some who work and pray—and some
  Who wake and weep in hell.

I hear the Christian curse his birth,
  Jews, Pagans crying out
Against the heavens and the earth,
  In blasphemy and doubt.

The deep gulf between Right and Wrong
Daily becomes a thing
That widens, widens—and the long
Bread lines are lengthening.

I see Despair traced on the wall
Where none knew what it meant,
In companies ignoring all
The smothered discontent.

Again they meet. I hear the tread
Of lawless bands—and see,
Upon a million faces spread,
The scowl of anarchy!

Green:
Enough—nor dwell on hapless things
So blighting to our cheer.
Alow, aloud the birch-log sings
A welcome to the year.

And while we watch the dancing elves,
Just turn another page,
And recollect that we ourselves
Live in a golden age.

And living in an age of gold,
I fear I cannot see,
Or sympathize with any scold
Proclaiming anarchy.

Brown:

Not anarchy!

Green:

What else?

Brown:

No! No!
It was a passing mood,
An idle fancy. Now the glow
Of flame-flowers scents the wood.

Gray:

A nibble! Surely, to insist
Upon a glowing scent
Is marking Brown an anarchist
Or else a decadent!

Green:

Decadency but serves to blur
The candor of the skies.

Brown:

Its service simply is to stir
And waken some surprise.

Gray:

Proceed and tell us how you write
With hope or with despair,
Spending yourself but to invite
Age, poverty and care.

Brown:

The tale is less than many think
Who reckon it divine,
With no emotions taught to drink
Remembrance as of wine.

Beauty is mine to seek and chart,
With Nature as a guide,
Amid the lilies of the heart,
Through fibres pushed aside.

Wherefore I cull me here a rose,
With lilies in between;
And reap but where Another sows,
To sow where others glean.

And, plucking blossoms now and then
For Love alone, I know,
Alas! nor how nor even when
Another one will grow.

By hour and day and month and year
I do become a mark,
And am shot through with killing fear
And horror of the dark.

Green:

A truce to such depressing moods,
And pipes and glasses bring!
Lo! in my fancy now the woods
Are carpeted with Spring.

Like fugitives from fairyland,
With dewy gems impearled,
The flowers begin to understand
And range the forest world.

As gay and reckless as of old,
Still rollicking with fun,
The dandelions spend their gold
Carousing in the sun.

Oh, never any daffodil
But heeds the vernal call,
Divinely pulsing with the thrill
And wonder of it all!

Just yonder do the pansies peer
Around the passing herds,
Awakening as if to hear
Some carol of the birds.

And back and forth the kingcups skip
About the blossom queen,
All watching now the crocus trip
A measure down the green.

Brown:

Already drifting is the snow
On roof and square and street,
With muted echoes from the slow,
Sad tramp of weary feet.

They pass who duel with the stern
Necessities—and grope
With failing strength who only learn
The hopelessness of hope.

Green:

Hark! midnight slowly tolls.

Gray:

Time leaps
The hurdled universe
Once over.

Brown:

While the city sleeps
Securely on its purse
Of luxury.

Green:

No more, for lo!
I only see the woods;
As, down the year, beyond the snow,
An April orchard buds.

Wherein by many a spreading tree,
Descending far away,
In clean forgetfulness I see
The little children play.

And vocalized the air now shakes
As, hurrying along,
The punctual bobolincoln breaks
Into a world of song.

Till gathering from far and near
The wondrous lyrics ring,
Arousing violets to hear
The leaping laugh of Spring.

Daring and urging many a rose
To burst in crimson showers,
Already faintly stirs and flows
The best blood of the flowers.

And over tree and tower and town,
With night and darkness gone,
Around the lily stars are blown
The roses of the dawn.

Gray:

The dawn?

Green:

Aurora bravely pins
On high a starry page.—

Brown:

Illegible.

Green:

Whereof begins
Another golden age.

Brown:

Born with an instint to destroy,
The vandal ages pass
As heedlessly as any boy
Who stones a window-glass.

Why make a mockery of things,
Excusing it as Art?

Green:

A mockery—when Joy still sings
Deep in the common heart?

Brown:

I fear the songs know much distress.

Gray:

Above the darkest night,
The stars still shine.

Brown:

For happiness?

Gray:

Immortal souls shall light
On earth forever and for aye,
With their *magnificat,*
While lad and lass together stray.

Green:

The heavens echo that:
For it is Love makes life divine.

Gray:

A million systems move,
With thronging suns and moons that shine
Beneath the rule of Love.

Brown:

The war-worn world begins to tire
And bend beneath the load

That burdens it—and to inquire
The distance and the road;

Begins to question and to doubt
The guide-book and the Guide,
Who lit the stars and blew them out
Ere heaven was descried.

Its faith is gone!

Green:

But something more
Than faith is making plain
The highway to the Secret Door,
Since Hope and Love remain.

Gray:

Since Hope and Love remain, the great
World, reeling, bludgeoned, hurled
From God, is master of its Fate.

Green:

Bludgeoned?

Brown:

Alas—

Gray:

The world!

OUTWARD BOUND

TO

EDWIN MARKHAM

AT THE DOOR.

HERE at the door are visions unfulfilled,
Dreams to be dreamt, and voices—voices stilled,
As Eden darkly was ere the first bird
In the ancestral silences was heard.

And here are songs midway in homing flight,
That hover on frail pinions and alight
Softly, less audibly than is the quake
Of spirits tremulous, or hearts that break,
Here at the door.

Here at the door are many messages
Of cheer and lurking faith—a folded kiss,
A sealed desire, a sigh, a memory
Of things that were as rainfall on the sea.

Thronging are shapes and shadows near at hand,
Cast by the sun of some lost fairyland.
And in the air are rumors and the stir
Of meetings and long partings to occur,
Here at the door.

THE GHOSTLY HOUND.

STRETCHED on the threshold of the night,
No neighbors spy
The heavy jaws but shun the sight,
On passing by:

The heavy jaws that sag and yawn
With hungry guile,
Until the coming of the dawn
Blurs them awhile.

O Hound of Death so darkly still,
Haunting the door!
Sniffing in silence at the sill,
Forevermore!

Gray ghostly house! Shall lurking fears
Sigh through the hall,
Until the last lone tenant hears
The hushed footfall?

*LITANY OF NATIONS.

The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters . . . and shall be chased before the wind.—Isaiah.

GREECE.

AEONS of old were wandering down the seas,
When Homer sang at Chios—and the sweet
Tranquillity of marching silences
Was broken at my feet.

*Written in 1912.

Great dawns have shown the way,
When we have wandered.
God, in the battle sway,
What have we squandered?

ITALY.

Avid and Roman-born in soul and sense,
Master of all else but myself was I,
When, bound by silken cords of indolence,
I saw the world go by.

FRANCE.

Ravaging, roystering and repenting—save
In story and the regions of romance,
Rises the moon on whom more mad and brave
And beautiful than France?

GERMANY.

Once German arms and German armies hurled
Thunders on Rome. Than mine no readier hand
Would wake the violin and woo the world,
Were it a fairyland.

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY.

Mine is a house divided but upheld
By the sheer force of many hemming powers.
Ages, like forests, have been hewn and felled
To build my crumbling towers.

RUSSIA.

Gray winters flourish and old empires fail;
And still the starry watchmen sally forth,
As wardens, with me, of the frozen grail
And ramparts of the North.

BALKAN STATES.

Stabbing the skies for stars and air in which
To bask awhile and breathe—shall we remain
Simply the little brothers of the rich?
God! have we fought in vain?

SPAIN.

Strong was my soul in war and wise in peace.
On whom else was the Moslem vanguard hurled?
Ay, but for me had any Genoese
Sailed and brought back a world?

SWITZERLAND.

High noons and sunsets pass while I repeat
The world-old secret of the endless quest:
And with the nations ageing at my feet,
I overlook the West.

GREAT BRITAIN.

Flecking the seas where war and tempest brew,
And biding till the gonfalons are furled,

My British sails have dared and driven through
Thunders that shook the world.

AMERICA.

Never so many millions have been free,
As to my shores have come from pole to pole.
A by-word have I made of liberty,
In giving them a soul?

JAPAN.

Amid the warring peoples I, that slept
And dreamt of wide dominion—confident,
Ambitious, urging, conquering—have stept
Out from the orient.

CHINA.

Glory and power for ages had been mine,
Until upon me fell a sudden night,
Such as makes beacon-star republics shine:
And my eyes saw the light.

TURKEY.

In infidel debate on whence and why,
They hiss my God, and know not whether hale
And wise, or worn and withering am I,
Behind the crimson veil.

Great dawns have shown the way,
When we have wandered.
God, in the battle sway,
What have we squandered?

HADLEYBURG.

Hadleyburg was the most honest and upright town in all the region round about.—Mark Twain.

JOHN BARLEYCORN he said the town
Was half a knave and half a clown,
Nor saner than the law allowed:
With all its stiff restraints and prim
Observances, the place, he vowed,
Had too much starch in it for him,
And kept itself upon the jump
To whip the devil round the stump.

That crooked souls and crooked knees
Distinguished men from walking trees,
Was sagely then and there agreed:
But bent on laughing them to scorn
Mad John, denying them a creed,
Resolved to stray amid the corn,
And eavesdropping from stalk to stalk,
To hear some goblin money talk.

And peeping from behind a bee,
He fell into a reverie,
Beholding them so smugly housed,
And pondered what would happen had
Some sudden thunder been aroused!
Thinking of which the silly lad
Collapsed beside a brawling brook
And laughed until the welkin shook.

MY DOG.

TODAY hell chuckled at another lie,
That gave no human being any pain,
Except one temporary soul. Nor Cain
Was more heart-heavy when he came to die.

I branded him a cur that by-and-bye
Would go the way of mongrels and be slain,
By man nor God regretted; clear and plain
Were the reproaches written in his eye.

He bridled slightly ere he slunk away
An hour ago and perished in a bog,
Saving two children who had gone astray:
Since when the sirens sounding through the fog
Are Gabriel horns that thunder me to pray,
Or to be damned for slandering my dog.

MAGDALEN.

BLINDED, O Dante, by love at first sight,
Her face did yet betray what beauty meant!
Beauty, that always is so imminent,
And fugitive and plumed for sudden flight.

Sappho nor Beatrice was she whose slight,
Frail spirit was a candle not yet spent.
Her body, worn with passion, had not bent
Nor broken on the rough coasts of the night.

Why did they look askance? She was not wise,
Or worldly, in not wishing any crown,
Such as a queen might covet—or a clown.
Why did they look askance? She and the skies
Were witnesses against the craven Town,
That held her by the hair lest It should drown.

OVERWORLD TO UNDERWORLD.

GOD went to sleep one day in quiet,
And had a dream of bee-folk swarming,
With stingers whetted for a riot;
His work so needed some reforming.

And since bee-folk are very human,
Both as to virtues and to vices,
They settled down as man and woman
Engaged in making laws and prices.

And some, with both hands on the Bible,
  Were not above clandestine sinning,
Refraining meanwhile, as a libel,
  To praise the work from the beginning.

The healing balm of better wages
  Drew others to condemn the revel
And recreations of the ages,
  As strongly smelling of the devil.

Who breaks as well as makes the laws is
  Since then as zealously as ever
Resigned to remedy the causes,
  And rock the cradle of endeavor.

Amid the stress and strain and tension,
  And rot and rust and sloth and shirking,
It baffles human comprehension
  How well the old machine is working.

Working? Sheer heresy nor schism
  The face of honest labor blanches.
The Tree? A spray of socialism
  To kill the roots and save the branches?

Each day a Sabbath! Who would falter
  In sanctimony or in sighing?
Nor hope to blunder past the altar,
  And plunder heaven without dying?

UNDERWORLD TO OVERWORLD.

GREAT is the age, so vainly great!
That strives to quench and quell and hew
The springs and pillars of the State:
If greatness knew!

Brief power and passion so abound
As to enthrall the very few,
And go on hedging them around,
Who cared nor knew.

Who rightly reckons any more
The seasons wherein darkly brew
The dissipations of the poor,
Who dared nor knew?

Say who of them knows right from wrong!
Or gives a damn for me or you!
Or heeds the heavy undersong!
If they but knew!

Gray, writhen masses coiled and curled!
Half-hooded eyes that glitter through
The thunders of the underworld!
If God but knew—if God but knew!

ENIGMA.

WHERE shall the ant spend the night,
The last night of all?
Or the bee, or the bird,
Whose song was a prayer hardly heeded or heard?
Or the serpents that crawl,
Panic-stricken of light?
Or the soaring untameable things
That have wings?
Shall they fall,
Or abide?
Shall they hide
In the skull . . . in the husk
Of the bat-haunted void . . . in the dusk
That is falling like fine
Sifted ashes on that which has strangely been yours
or been mine?
Shall the tomb
Be a quickening womb?
Or worms be the anchoret ivies that twine
In the hair of a friend,
Loved and lost,
At what cost,
In the end?

Answer and say,
As one may,
That the riddle is slight.

But in sight
Of the ultimate day,
On the eve of the night,
Shall the jungles be gay?
Shall they thrill at the stem?
Shall the roar in them be one of fright?
Or the trumpeting thunders in them
Be a plea for the light
Fading out of the sky?
Shall the stars, that were once traveled by,
Flicker high,
Blown by winds, each of them but the sigh
And regret of a god?
Or shall heavily nod
Every head,
Weighted down by the ominous dread?

Having loved, having died
Glorified,
Shall man, on the anvil, have quailed
At the frost in the fire,
And God! to the dark be resigned,
When the last spark of hope
He could find,
Shall be ashen—and nothing have scope,
Or escape from the doom of desire
For the light that had failed,
In a world gone to bed?

THE HOSPITAL

I.

APPROACHING near and nearer now the cold,
Inexorable tyranny of dread
Assails the soul. Death smiles and counts the cost,
Clear stars that thrill and shudder overhead.

II.

The pouring darkness seems to close around
Another world forever. Something calls
Across an age of silence—and the sound
Is dying, dying slowly down the halls.

III.

She stands with eyes adread and watches them
Prepare the table—sees them place the cone
Upon the smooth white marble, clean and chill.
Receding voices hover here and there,
And die away in calm. The surgeons wait
With quiet confidence. Already cuts
The sudden menace of the glittering blades;
And stealthy as the shadow of a fear,
The opiate is creeping on the brain.
O cool, delicious languidness . . . such as
The leaves must feel beneath the early rain
Of April . . . and the gasping spirit falls
Into the yawning anæsthetic night.

IV.

Drenched and submerged, the senses grope and swim
  Up from oblivion: a second birth
Among the living magnifies the dim
  Magnificence and glory of the earth.

V.

So now they say the end is very near;
  The feeble pulse still flutters with the same
Dim human fire—and one may almost hear
  The Moving Finger searching for the name.

VI.

Once more the smell of earth and rich warm wood,
  With rain and air and sunshine, as of yore.
Wayfaring in the hand of God, where all is good,
    Once more.

ENCOUNTER

I MET my dead self on the street,
  And we both bowed,
As strangers do who would not greet
  Dead men aloud.

Startled . . . we passed . . . with ghostly eyes,
  Condemned to stare,
Not having time to recognize
  Each other there.

Reflected in dull eyes, that were
The eyes of Spring,
Autumn he saw . . . in me . . . the blur
Of withering:

Bay leaves . . . he saw . . . that might have been
Less sere and brown,
And hope . . . an ember smoking in
The dream burned down.

Fancy the soul of Caliban,
Ashen desire,
Virgin of any breeze to fan
The sunken fire!

Around us many in the throng,
With ghostly tread,
Were strangely spirited along,
As are the dead.

Faces in legion bore no sign
Of having found
Beauty nor anything divine,
In sight or sound.

Had but to them some word revealed
That life and land,
In a new world, so long concealed,
Were near at hand!

. . . God has mute spies—and one of them,
In youth arrayed,
Could find no language to condemn
The trust betrayed.

* * *

I met my dead self on the street,
And we both bowed,
As strangers do who would not greet
Dead men aloud.

ITINERARY.

TO

WILLIAM CANTON.

INVOCATION.

CONJURE nothing else to darken
The already cloudy passes;
Vocal in the thunders, harken
To the gospel of the grasses!

Reedy tongues and eery voices,
Hushed amid the daily drudging,
Say that long life to the naiads
Still is hardly worth begrudging:

Say that Time and Change have taken
Grace and beauty much as pillage,
Leaving sense and soul forsaken
As a world-forgotten village.

Ravaged by the vandal strollers
Is the garden-close of beauty,
Where the flower of truth once grew in
Stately faith with love and duty.

Why not just believe in fairies?
Or that something still discloses

Wonders wrought wherever there is
Grass or star or grace of roses?

Say nor sing that grief comes never
Until pleasure has departed,
Nor the dusk to any forest
But a bird dies broken-hearted.

STAGELAND.

I.

UPON a stage as ghostly near
And real as you and I,
With now a smile and then a tear,
The ages idle by.

II.

For grudging fame or drudging shame,
The strolling company
Is masquerading in the same
Old human comedy.

III.

Anon the Critic seems to gauge
Performers by the way
Their predecessors on the stage
Did honor to the play.

IV.

By night a throng of starry eyes
  Is crowded in the hall,
Endeavoring to realize
  The meaning of it all.

V.

Amid the waiting and suspense,
  Does anybody know
That many in the audience
  Were players long ago?

VI.

Rehearsing rumors in the wings
  Since Eve and Adam sinned,
Was Eden haunted by the things
  They whisper in the wind?

ON PATROL.

I *LOAF and invite my soul.*
  How curious! How real!
Underfoot the divine soil—
  Overhead the sun.—Leaves of Grass.

I reckon it a luxury,
  Such as the sky,
To be here at the door and see
  Him idle by.

So slowly does he come and go
  Around and round;
A comfort it would be to know
  Where he is bound.

An optimist beyond a doubt,
  Whose faith inspires,
But counsels reticence about
  His own desires.

Contrives to loiter and explore
  From day to day,
Observing wonders more and more
  Along the way—

Grass and the sun, the moon, a star,
  A human face,
Becoming so familiar
  In every place.

I marvel to myself that he
  Has ever grown
Engrossed in them—he seems to be
  Mostly alone.

By day he hears the shouts and cries
  That fill the town
With stress and thunder, as the eyes
  Go up and down.

But dark and devious are his ways.
  Who ever heard
A secret when a fellow says
  Hardly a word?

Droll as a mummy on the Nile,
  That dumbly thinks
Enough to petrify a smile
  Upon a Sphinx.

As though awaiting tardy news,
  Day in and out,
Haunting the busy avenues,
  He strolls about,

Soliciting a word, a glance,
  Or just the hand
Of an old crony who perchance
  May understand

The sudden touch of loneliness
  That comes again
Amid the shouting and the press
  Of many men.

They look at him askance—heigh-ho!
  His purse is slim;
And few have leisure to bestow
  Or waste on him.

Lacking is he in much—and still
  He makes ends meet.
His presence in the autumn chill
  Has warmed the street.

Ay, and moreover, what he had
  To give away,
Would hardly keep a cherub clad,
  Observers say.

Is he oblivious of that
  Inquiring gaze
That turns to disapproval at
  His idle ways?

His fool philosophy is just
  The sort to give
An arrant wanderer who must
  Have time to live.

Securities nor any land
  Has he at all;
Nothing for payment on demand
  His own to call.

Wherefore he is particular
  To recommend
Another course as better far
  To comprehend

Than such a one as he pursues;
  Because you might
Be with him day by day—and lose
  Him in the night.

Has such aversion to a stir!
  The dogs of war
Have habits that the common cur
  Is noted for.

War—is it aught but selfishness
  And greed gone mad?
Its hungry body in a dress
  Of nettles clad.

Has conflict any noble end,
  Save as the spark
That flashes and reveals a friend?
  Dawn after dark.

Meanwhile, in seeking liberty,
  He finds no home
Commodious as having free
  Expanse to roam.

Asks nothing else. He is, or seems,
  So far away
From all the customary themes
  Of every day.

Appearing usually above
  Familiar
Surroundings as acquaintance of
  Another star.

On speaking terms with Jupiter,
  One might suppose;
And Venus? intimate with her
  As with a rose.

The planets to him certainly
  Are populous,
As nether regions of the sea
  Appear to us.

Acquainted with much goblin lore
  Is he withal.
And sh! may have forgotten more
  Than some recall.

To him no Sphinx or Pyramid
  Can be so old
But that the secrets in them hid
  Shall yet be told.

(Is one to arrogance inclined,
  Who would but know
What the Creator had in mind
  Ages ago?)

His quests in search of knowledge are
  Astonishing;
Truth, like a candle, shining far
  In everything—

Glimmering, luring him along
  From dread to dread,
While the fixed stars of right and wrong
  Burn overhead.

Hence bear with me a moment more;
  Or better still,
Come in the house and shut the door:
  They judge him ill.

And at his habits roll their eyes,
  The neighbors here,
Who deem him something less than wise
  And more than queer.

The secret passions and the surge
  Of lust acquire
Divine momentum in the urge
  Of heart's desire.

Nothing that does a human wrong
  Is less divine.
How deeply wounded are the strong,
  Who show no sign!

Strength is the duty of the oak,
  As of the dike.
The city and the forest folk
  Are much alike.

Among them hardly has been seen
  Or found the mark
Of difference that lies between
  The skin and bark. . . .

Such thoughts of course are quite enough
  To queer a saint.
His Pan is something much too rough
  To carve or paint;

Is something such as one may seek
  And find in trees,
Half Dutch or Spanish, and half Greek
  Or Japanese.

Foolish? When April comes around
  To his abode,
This fellow feels in duty bound
  To take the road:

But meanwhile rummages the town,
  Remains a boy,
And turns traditions upside down
  In search of joy:

And idolizes every child
  Within his ken,
Albeit wholly reconciled
  Never again.

I saw him only yesterday,
  Shred-worn and thin
With pity and passion—men say
  Looking like sin.

But that, sir, can that be the word
  Of the right ring?
His heart was as that of a bird
  With a broken wing.

So has he grown to be a friend;
  In time of need,
Ready to challenge and defend
  With word or deed.

A wayfarer so valiant gay
  Can be a boon
Companion any idle day
  Or hour in June.

When all the drowsy purple land
  Is full of sun,
His hope is yet to understand
  Thy will be done.

Content to win, resigned to lose,
  Yet on release,
To find, beyond the avenues,
  The ways of peace.

DERELICT.

I STRAY at ease from street to street,
  Imposing on the town;
Contented with enough to eat
  And just enough renown
To satisfy the public eye,
  And dislocate a frown.

Oddly approved, on every hand,
  Is such fantastic strife,
That I have come to understand,
  While dancing to the fife,
The comedy, the greatness and
  The littleness of life.

My clothes may claim to be akin
  To cousin-german shreds;
And often chalkily the skin
  Shows through the latticed threads;
Seeing success is more or less
  A game of tails or heads.

Which makes me wonder just how much
  My fault it was to leave

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The road and fall in love and clutch
An angel by the sleeve.
But all the same my purse became
A thing an elf could heave.

Straightway my course was toward the last
Resort of poverty;
Sickness and debt came crowding fast,
And I went on a spree,
Cursing the present and the past
And the lean years to be;

Cursing the woman and the man
Who had begot me poor;
Cursing the heavy iron ban
Of poverty the more
Because, by chance or circumstance,
My drift was low and lower.

And she, the Missis, fell away,
Flickering like a flame,
And dwindled slowly day by day,
Until the kiddie came
And bruised our souls for that his gray
Outlook would be the same.

On me a thieving passion stole;
  Thinking perhaps to save
The only one in all this whole
  Creation who forgave
The little sin of nature in
  A somewhat feeble slave.

She died. And God seems more and more
  Remote since then to praise.
Being numb and weary and so sore
  In very many ways,
My will remains but to deplore
  The sad or happy days.

And still the moments slip and slide
  From winter into spring;
And foam upon the countryside
  Is breaking when I bring
Across the mart a foolish heart
  To hear the thrushes sing.

As darkness deepens on the town
  Of carriages and cars,
And roaring thoroughfares that drown
  The birds—their happy bars,
I go to find a bed far down
  Under the quiet stars.

BUMBLE BEE.

An April Reckoning.

SINCE Jason and Magellan
Or Raleigh made a stir,
Was ever such a felon
And sheer adventurer!

Resolved to reconnoitre,
Ere May shall come to pass,
Sealed orders bid him loiter
About the flowerless grass.

By an instinct unerring,
He shapes his course to hear
The soft and sudden stirring
That strikes no mortal ear.

His raids across the border
He plans as one inspired,
Nor ponders on the order
And energy required.

Wise? A more knowing rover
Cocks eye on land nor sea!
The fourth leaf on the clover
He deems no rarity.

His decalogue imposes
  No promises to keep,
Made ere the great red roses
  Had wakened from their sleep;

Made ere the first field daisies
  Grew wide-eyed wondering
To see that which amazes
  Narcissus in the spring.

Outbound to raise a rumpus,
  He drones a rumbling song,
Nor boxes any compass,
  Nor recks of right and wrong.

A rough rogue of a fellow,
  Half fickle, half sincere,
Withal may reach the yellow
  Seas and across them steer—

And find his sins forgiven,
  At anchor where the rills
Flow honey in a heaven
  Of golden daffodils.

TRAVEL.

(*Ante Bellum.*)

I WENT to Europe, said my friend,
  Expecting wonders rare
To open vistas without end,
  And lay the future bare.

Paris, of course, would be in style;
  And Berlin, London, Rome,
Would show me something more worth while
  Than anything at home.

And then to hear them cheer a crown,
  Or praise some rusty thing
That the dark ages handed down,
  Was—was astonishing.

SEA SPRAY AND WOOD WINDS.

TO

EDWARD J. WHEELER

FROM AN ATLANTIC WINDOW.

MY window looks upon the sea,
Where white sails hover and appear
Like gulls that idly float and veer,
As in a vision quietly.
The sun has dwindled to a beam,
Going behind the Camden hill,
And vanishes: the sea is still,
As in a dream.

Above, the trailing galaxies
Frame the full moon that comes to gild
The sea graves where the wrecks are stilled,
And are one with the silences.
On worn and wasted frontiers dwell
War echoes—dying, dying down,
In hollow rumors of renown,
As in a shell.

Night: and the sea-marks faintly shine.
The gulls are gone, the sails are furled;
And rocking is the drowsy world,

Cradled in dreams and airs divine.
Night: and the stars resume control,
  And patiently their vigils keep,
  Till weary hopes have gone to sleep,
    As in a soul.

EPHEMERON.

THERE was a famous city long ago,
  With sun-bright wharves and streets that noon by noon
Have emptied and grown still: and there are no
  Familiar voices mingling with the croon
Of rocking seas and tides that ebb and flow,
  Droning and chanting a continual rune.

THE HUNT.

HARKEN the hounds on the waters tonight,
  Baying the stars as they hurry and flee!
Stirring remembrance and blurring delight,
  Triumphs the trumpeting sea.

Gale upon gale rises foaming and fills
  Sail after sail sweeping into the lee;
While in the darkness, now calling the hills,
  God goads the galloping sea.

AT THE WILL OF THE MOON.

JOY has come with a word from the sea,
And has brought to my cabin door
A hope for the dream, and one more
When the dream is a memory.

Joy has gone . . . and red leaves are astir;
Ay—and gone like an ebbing thing,
Is all of the glory of Spring,
That can only return with Her.

OH! NOT THE MOON.

OH! not the moon, nor forest minstrelsy,
Conjures and stirs the clear, shy voice of Song;
Nor all the thunders of the clarion sea,
Even as yonder dim, far, heart-loud thundering human throng.

ON CHATHAM BEACH.

SOFTLY the gathering shadows finger and release
Star after silver star—and with a crimson kiss,
Warmly the molten moon burns down the dreaming seas.
Dear God! what heaping thunders have been spent for this!

WAR.

CHARGE upon thundering charge an army sweeps
To crimson victory beneath the rain
Of storming cannon, and a nation leaps
To glory—scarred with curses of the slain.

THE DUEL.

O SONG that ends before it has been sung!
And theme that breaks before the tale is told!
When soul and body—one so gray and old,
Stabs one so hale and young!

VIGIL.

SEARCHING the seasons for a secret presence, I
Must watch and wait:
She may come late,
She may be passing by,
As the wind does viewlessly:
And such is fate.

A CHARACTER.

THEY said—and it was credible—the whole
Hot host of hell was clamoring to see
One mutinous, indomitable soul
Duel with destiny.

OUBLIETTE.

THINK how the felon in his cell
Must love the smallest thing . . .
The fly, the spider! God! how well
He knows the human sting!

LOVE AND LIFE.

Love.—I have known all worth knowing, and have wept,
And wondered what to give worth giving more,
And been betrayed . . . and with my tears have slept,
Till life again came knocking at the door.

Life.—I have made merry, and much zest have found,
And celebrated, duelling with lust,
And relished love . . . and shuddered at the sound,
As of hearts breaking . . . crumbling into dust.

RENUNCIATION.

LOVE built a house and strove with might to weave
Something that faded and was hardly more
Than hieroglyph. Then sadly taking leave,
Love said good-bye to hope—and shut the door.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

VACANT? The house is filled with vacant eyes;
Is like a grave that leaks in sudden showers.
Outside—the garden, under dripping skies,
Is filled with green and rusty iron flowers.

MORS OMNIBUS COMMUNIS.

HERE in the sun, warm winds and waving grass
Are full of sighs and whispers. One by one,
With solemn faces, men and women pass,
Here in the sun.

SPRING SONG.

SOFTLY at dawn a whisper stole
Down from the Green House on the Hill,
Enchanting many a ghostly bole
And wood-song with the ancient thrill.

Gossiping on the country-side,
Spring and the wandering breezes say
God has thrown Heaven open wide,
And let the thrushes out today.

SERENADE.

THE Moon puts on her silver veil
And shawl of lace: and with far lutes

And violins in many a dale,
  The thrushes blow their woodland flutes.

Quickened by many a ghostly cheer,
  Under the Moon the forest heaves
And sways with ecstasy to hear
  The eery laughter of the leaves.

CANTICLE.

DEVOUTLY worshiping the oak,
  Wherein the barred owl stares,
The little feathered forest folk
  Are praying sleepy prayers.

Praying the summer to be long
  And drowsy to the end,
And daily full of sun and song,
  That broken hopes may mend.

Praying the golden age to stay
  Until the whip-poor-will
Appoints a windy moving day,
  And hurries from the hill.

AUTUMN SONG.

ONCE more the crimson rumor
  Fills the forest and the town;
And the green fires of summer
Are burning—burning down.

Oh, the green fires of summer
  Are burning down once more!
And my heart is in the ashes
  On the forest floor.

INTERLUDE.

SINCE yesterday has been no word,
  Nor voice of anything
To thrill the forest; and no bird
  Has any heart to sing.

Since yesterday has been no track
  Of Pan, nor any power
To lure the gypsy summer back,
  And fool a single flower.

REQUIESCAT

GRAY are the sentry leaves and thinned
  That whisper at my cabin door,
Sighing and mourning as the wind
  Worries and walks the forest floor.

O leaves, O leaves that find no voice
  In the white silence of the snows,
To bid the crimson woods rejoice,
  Or wake the wonder of the rose!

FANCY FIELDS.

TO

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.

THE MAKING OF SPRING.

UPON a day in April
  There came a sudden hush—
The silence of the forest,
  Expectant of a thrush.

Hardly an aspen quivered,
  Until a breeze and rill
Were startled by the rumor
  Of daisies on the hill.

Sudden—a gust of passion
  Developed in the air,
As though the Little People
  Were thronging everywhere.

And lo! the spell that deepened
  On larch and pine and fir,
Was broken. In the maple,
  The sap began to stir.

Softly the doors of silence
  Were opened; and set free,
Were voices full of wilding,
  Prophetic mystery.

Had some world been discovered?
  Or had Pan misbehaved?
Or was it but a nation
  That needed to be saved?

The thrush came with a question,
  Adventurous to find
Some remnants of the wonder
  That God had left behind.

THE GARDEN CINDERELLA.

I THINK the hermit thrush had spread
  The tidings with a vocal wand,
As dawn came with a dappled tread
  So softly on the garden land.

Souls of the roses one by one
  Went palely through the garden skies,
Like ashes sifting from the sun,
  Or the stray ruins of butterflies

And with a rosy sisterhood
  Of blossoms dreaming in the dawn,
Demurely nodded one that stood
  Behind a dewy curtain drawn.

She dreamt her dreams, and never gazed
  Beyond the curtain, it is told,
Until the Twilight came and raised
  A wondering little face of gold.

It may have been a fairy face
  Thrilling the garden with a smile,
Or just a primrose sent to grace
  The darkness for a little while:

Fleeing perhaps a nunnery
  Of blossoms very softly furled,
Confessing her desire to see
  The beauty of the garden world.

ENVOY

Veiled Princess! In the morrow land
  That gathers nearer hour by hour,
Beneath the Secret Shadow Hand,
  Is any face or any flower?

OAK LORE.

I WENT into the Wood
  Of the Green Mystery,
And sought for the secret
  Abode of Hidden Glee.
On a tomb it was written
  That *ye who seek shall find,*
Though the owl have vision,
  Or the bat be blind.

I went into the Wood
  Of the Green Mystery,
And felt for the secret
  Repose of every tree.
Sealed in them was the message
  That *ye who strive are sure*
Of desire that only
  Prevails to endure.

EVENING.

THERE is only a star in the sky;
  On the wandering waters the breeze
Dies away in the ghost of a sigh.

Over meadow and marsh comes the cheep
  Of the frog: and adream in the trees
Are the wren and the robin asleep.

Now rises the moon like a frail
  Floating bubble just over the hill,
At the far keening call of the quail.

All the dark brooding forest is still,
  Save the aspen so shyly astir,
Or the hidden and hesitant rill.

Then the moon slowly wanes, and the gray
  Forest deepens as softly as night,
And the rivulet dreams on its way.

AN UMBEL FOR SPRING.

NEARER now and ever nearer,
  Wing to wing,
Come the swallows with a clearer
    Twittering.
    Everything
Wakes and bourgeons as though straying
In adventure, hoping, saying
    It is Spring.

Breezy ripples dance and quiver
Riotously on the river.
    Skipping
Deftly now and tripping
    Hand in hand,
Over sea and over land

Gather oaf and elf and fairy,
Shyly vigilant and wary.
Of the sere
Sentry leaves and bastion grasses,
As the season blithely passes
Down the year.

Thronging couriers of the air
Stir and start and would be going.
Eery trumpets, softly blowing
Everywhere,
Echo faintly and declare,
Surely, surely
It is April so demurely
Tipping every voice and tossing
Flowery purses as of old,
Spilling minted marigold
As a fee at every crossing.

Quietly the hosts of June
Strike their dewy southern tents,
Delicate with woven scents;
Breaking camp
With muted tramp;
Marching nearer past the gleaming,
Idle rivers southward dreaming—
Weird and quaintly,
Very faintly
Chanting unto Spring
Songs that men may never sing.

Buds are boldly peeping out
Of the tents now pitched about
In the grasses;
Feeling safe and very sure
Of themselves—and so secure
That the reckless ones are finely
Gossiping: and so divinely
Is it done
That the breezes guard the passes
In the sun.

Happy, happy ever after
Are the shout and lyric laughter
Echoing
Over hill and rill and valley,
With the rout and rush and rally
Of the Spring.

Never any living thing
In the mad and merry season
But rejoices beyond reason:
Cows are lowing;
Waters flowing;
Lambs are bleating;
Birds are greeting;
Everything that has a voice is
In the chorus and rejoices
In the mere delight of giving
Pleasure and in simply living.

Hush and hear
Yonder mighty army stirring
In the grasses;
Cheer on cheer
Rises as the season passes
Sheer
Overhead on pinions whirring
Far and near,
Winging, winging, winging down the year.

APOTHEOSIS.

LAST night the world died.
How the imps skurried!
Some souls were enskied;
Some of them buried.

Others who were as tall
And strong as seven,
To the surprise of all,
Fell short of heaven.

Many who stormed the gate,
Bent on acquiring
Glory at any rate,
Soon began tiring.

Some took the time to ring,
  And were anointed.
How many hurrying
  Were disappointed!

THE SISTERS.

NIGHT, in the chambered east,
  Sits with Dawn at the door.
Dropped from her golden feast,
  Star-crumbs scatter the floor.

Mice from behind the sun
  Patter along the sky;
Nibbling the crumbs they run,
  Touching with footprints shy.

Echoes of purring sound
  Over the world below;
Nothing more to be found,
  Scamper—away they go!

Dawn, in the chambered east,
  Rises: and through the door,
Night has gone from the feast
  Over an azure floor.

VALE.

AN idle wayfarer, it may be said,
Did briefly reverence the roadside flowers,
Wherein the roses burned from white to red,
Crumbling in crimson showers.

And on the upward and the downward slopes
Are embers now of many a cheerful fire,
Hardly alive beneath the smoldering hopes
And ashes of desire.

So, at the quiet going out of day,
And as the little brooks at vespers tell
Their pebbly rosaries—comes one to say
Good-bye and wish you well.

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